

**Mike Bodker Comments**  
(as prepared)  
**2015 Annual Convention**

Thank you very much.

I am truly honored to be before you today as president of GMA.

It's been a fast ride these past few years

from the efforts to incorporate

to being elected as the city's first mayor and starting a city from scratch

to now being president of GMA.

I'm humbled by and appreciate the trust that you have put in me.

Again, thank you.

Please allow me a moment to recognize and thank a few people

There's someone else who I need recognize this afternoon, and that is the "Founding Mother" of Sandy Springs, Eva Galambos.

Mayor of Sandy Springs from its incorporation in December 2005 to January 2014, Eva passed away on April 19.

Without her multi-decade effort to create Sandy Springs, it is doubtful that Johns Creek and the other new cities in metro-Atlanta would have been created.

Without her vision and tenacity, I know that I would not be here today as mayor of Johns Creek, much less as president of GMA.

Thank you, Eva, for all that you did for the cause of home rule and responsive local government.

On Friday, the GMA Board of Directors passed a resolution honoring Eva for her service to Sandy Springs and her role in the establishment of new cities in Georgia.

I'd like to ask Sandy Springs Mayor Rusty Paul to come up and accept this resolution.

I want to thank you for allowing me and my neighbors in Sandy Springs to pay tribute to Eva, the epitome of what a public servant should be.

She was truly a mentor to me and I've taken her wise and eloquent advice of "don't screw it up" to heart.

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I'm excited about the theme of this year's convention, Creative Impact.

More than just a label to slap on the convention, it has served as an inspiration to those that put this meeting together for our benefit.

From yesterday's opening session to the pop-up market to our concurrent sessions and everything else in between GMA staff has ensured that this year's convention is saturated with creativity and energy.

There's more to this year's theme, however, than simply highlighting the impact of the arts and culture on our cities, as worthy as that is.

And it's more than just celebrating creativity or creative people, which is worthy as well.

It's really about understanding what it takes to be successful.

If we take a hard look at the cities that are sharing their stories with us this year, we'll find that they share the common thread of collaboration, allowing each to creatively impact its community in positive ways.

Those initiatives and endeavors that make the most lasting and powerful impact on the life of our communities are those that are based in a spirit of collaboration.

Grounded in both respect and a belief in the power of diversity

a diversity of ideas and of talent, desires and dreams

this collaborative spirit must be embraced and championed in order for our cities, and our state, to prosper and succeed.

It is up to us here in this room today to understand this and I believe we do.

If you attended the panel discussion earlier this afternoon, you learned how communities as diverse as Blue Ridge, Thomasville and Athens are discovering success by collaborating with artists, entrepreneurs, business leaders, schools and community-based organizations.

Tomorrow you'll see how the cities of Cedartown, Douglasville and Statesboro are working with technical colleges, universities and local businesses to create innovative opportunities for small business development.

In Macon, the partnership between government, business, civic and education leaders is transforming the city's downtown.

Milledgeville has gained national prominence with its revitalization efforts that have involved the energy and passion of any number of groups and individuals in addition to the city.

My predecessor's hometown of Newnan recently celebrated the completion of a collaborative effort between the city, the University of West Georgia and the Board of Regents.

In Johns Creek, the City is actively working alongside business and economic development organizations and with our residents to develop our own vibrant mixed-use downtown we call The District.

As envisioned, The District will become an economic engine, and cultural and entertainment center that will sustain our City for future generations.

As we make final decisions on the way ahead, we do so knowing the outcome reflects the best of Johns Creek.

From the north Georgia mountains, to the Piedmont, to the coastal plains, cities and city officials have taken the lead on nurturing cooperative efforts that foster the best in people and their communities.

And it is important that we don't keep those efforts at home.

We must be willing to share that energy and spirit and drive with each other through this partnership we call GMA.

As the great author and political activist Hellen Keller is quoted as saying, “alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Earlier this month you may recall seeing news reports about the heroin crisis in our nation and state. These reports are just a microcosm of a much broader issue we all face with drug use in general.

Just last week, the Johns Creek Police Department, in coordination with the Drug Enforcement Agency, arrested two people who were renting a house within our community and using it as an alleged methamphetamine operation.

Approximately 20 pounds of crystal meth were found during the combined law enforcement raid.

Johns Creek is not only one of the safest cities in Georgia but it is consistently one of the top 10 safest cities in the U.S. Yet, despite our best efforts, we recognize that we are not immune to this threat.

I think all of us in this room understand that there are no insular communities. Drug use has permeated every level of society and it hides among us.

Our communities have tragically lost lives, both young and old, to addiction and overdoses and we must leverage our experience to aggressively turn the tide on this growing problem.

Standing here today I can't tell you what can be done about this problem, but I do know that we as city officials need to be involved.

As such, I've reached out to ACCG President and Gwinnett County Chairman Charlotte Nash to explore how our two organizations can harness the power, energy and creative forces of our respective memberships to help stem the tide of this epidemic.

Other challenges face us as well.

We must work collaboratively with each other, our county officials, ACCG and our friends under the Gold Dome on creating a better balance between cities and counties on service delivery and local option sales tax issues.

And it will take the collective energy and efforts of GMA staff and those of us in this room today to ensure that GMA continues to offer the types of services that:

- 1) help cities be efficient and effective, and
- 2) provides GMA with a diversified revenue structure that allows it to continue to promote its success and those of its members.

As we begin to tackle these and other challenges together, let's remember what Eric Wahl told us yesterday to innovate, we must see what everyone else sees, but we must be willing to think like no one has ever thought before.

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There is a phrase from my faith tradition ... tikkun olam that means "the world needs fixing, and it's our job to fix it."

My friend and mentor Eva Galambos embodied that philosophy in all that she did for her community, and I suspect that each of you here today do too.

It is our job to fix and nurture the world, or at least our small part of it.

I can think of no better way for us to do that to create those lasting and powerful impacts in our cities and state than by working together in a spirit of collaboration that

respects our differences, uplifts our common purpose and cares more about results than being in control.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to serve you as GMA president. It is indeed an honor.

Thank you and God bless.

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